

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3697

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 4495

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PO, RO

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH ROMANIAN AMBASSADOR TO PORTUGAL

REF: LONDON 12012 NOTAL

SUMMARY: ROMANIAN AMBASSADOR MARIN ILIESCU CONFIRMS THAT COMMUNISTS ARE LOSING SUPPORT BOTH AMONG THE POPULATION AND WITHIN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. BELIEVES PCP LEADERSHIP OVERLY RIGID. SEES ESCALATING VIOLENCE AND POSSIBLY CIVIL WAR IN PORTUGAL.

1. REFTEL SUPPLIED VIEWS OF MIHAI CROTTORU, FIRST SECRETARY OF ROMANIAN EMBASSY IN LONDON ON PORTUGUESE SITUATION. IT REPORTED THAT CROITORU WAS CLOSE FRIEND OF ROMANIAN AMBASSADOR
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TO LISBON, MARIN ILIESCU.

2. ILIESCU, ONE OF ROMANIA'S YOUNGEST AMBASSADORS AT 43, IS THE MOST ACTIVE COMMUNIST AMBASSADOR IN LISBON. HE IS BRIGHT, ARTICULATE AND A KEEN OBSERVER. HE HAS WELCOMED EXTENSIVE CONTACT WITH ME. WHILE HE HAS NOT BEEN AS FREE AS CROITORU WAS IN DISCUSSING INTERNAL EVENTS, HIS VIEWS GENERALLY COINCIDE WITH THOSE REPORTED REFTEL. THE ONLY SIGNIFICANT EXCEPTION IS PARA 5 REFTEL. ILIESCU BLAMES SOCIALISTS RATHER THAN PCP FOR THE SPLIT BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES. HE THINKS SOARES SHOULD HAVE HANDLED THE SINGLE LABOR UNION ISSUE BACK IN JANUARY WITH MORE ADROITNESS. AT THAT TIME PCP WAS STILL ANXIOUS TO FORM ALLIANCE WITH SOCIALISTS, BUT SOARES'S PUBLIC ATTACKS OBLIGED THEM TO RETALIATE. IN A LATIN COUNTRY, ACCORDING TO ILIESCU, ONCE A FIGHT BEGINS RECONCILIATION AND COMPROMISE BECOME EXTREMELY DIFFICULT.

3. I LUNCHEDED WITH ILIESCU TODAY AND TRIED OUT SOME MORE THEORIES ABOUT THE PCP ON HIM. TOLD HIM THAT MY PERSONAL JUDGMENT WAS THAT PCP WAS LOSING SUPPORT BOTH AMONG THE POPULATION AND FROM MEMBERS OF AFM. SIGNIFICANT EXCEPTION IN LATTER GROUP WAS FIFTH DIVISION. ALSO TOLD HIM I HAD IMPRESSION THAT PCP HAD SERIOUS INTERNAL DISSENSIONS BETWEEN CUNHAL HARDLINERS AND NEW BERLENGUISTA ELEMENT.

4. ILIESCU CONFIRMED BOTH HYPOTHESES, NOTING THAT FIFTH DIVISION WAS AN EXCEPTION. SAID CUNHAL HAD BEEN OVERLY RIGID IN HIS APPROACH. WHILE PCP WAS LOSING POPULAR SUPPORT, LEFTIST FRINGE GROUPS SUCH AS UDP WERE GAINING. THIS MEANT THAT PCP WAS NOW IN MIDDLE OF PORTUGUESE POLITICAL SPECTRUM. MOREOVER WHILE PCP CLAIMED 100,000 MEMBERS, MOST OF THOSE WERE "OPPORTUNISTS" SINCE BEING A COMMUNIST WAS THE "IN" THING TO DO IN PORTUGAL.

5. ILIESCU SAID GROWING MILITARY DISSATISFACTION WITH PCP STEMMED FROM THEIR BELIEF THAT PCP WAS A TOOL OF MOSCOW. EVEN VASCO GONCALVES IS CONVINCED OF THIS. HE, ILIESCU, DOES NOT BELIEVE THIS TO BE THE CASE, BUT HE DID NOT DENY MY OBSERVATION THAT THE PCP WAS OBVIOUSLY RECEIVING SOME SUPPORT FROM MOSCOW. ILIESCU NOTED THAT THE REINSTATEMENT OF JAIME NEVES AS HEAD OF THE COMMANDOS (LISBON 4431)
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WILL SERIOUSLY WEAKEN PCP INFLUENCE WITHIN THE MILITARY, SINCE THOSE WHO SOUGHT JAIME NEVES'S OUSTER HAD BEEN CLEARLY IDENTIFIED AS PCP MEMBERS.

6. ILIESCU AGREED WITH ME THAT PORTUGAL SEEMED TO BE IN FOR A PERIOD OF CONTINUING TURMOIL, AND THAT ESCALATING VIOLENCE WAS A REAL CONCERN. HE THOUGHT VIOLENCE WOULD EVENTUALLY LEAD TO CIVIL WAR.

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